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Editor's Note: A Thank You to the Brave, Brilliant Voices on Substack...



From the bottom of my heart, to every writer who lit something in me this week—thank you. ♥♥♥

I've been walking through a strange and beautiful landscape lately—somewhere between inspiration and introspection—and your words have helped me find the trail. Whether it was a raw confession, a poetic truth, a historical deep dive, or a firestarter on branding... I felt every one of you. I want to thank each of you.

I went comment-crazy...



Substack dive. 10 tabs open. 4 cups of tea. One broken soul (mine). And a metric ton of appreciation for all the writers who moved me, provoked me, made me laugh, or made me feel just a little less alone in this weird creative hustle.

Here's a heartfelt thank you for each of you that I had the honor of commenting on:

- ✓ [Addie Leak](#) – Thoughtful, sharp, and always showing up with insight.
- ✓ [Ali Chapman](#) – Quietly brilliant and beautifully grounded.
- ✓ [Andrew Cook](#) – Sees things others miss.
- ✓ [Ashley Walters](#) – Deep feeler, bold thinker.
- ✓ [Ashlyn Ciara](#) – Poetic soul with a pulse on the human condition.

- ✓ [Ariana Martin](#) – Wisdom disguised as humility.
- ✓ [Bri Grosvenor](#) – Heart-centered and electric on the page.
- ✓ [Brian Boyd](#) – Brings clarity like morning light.
- ✓ [Celest Yan](#) – Joyful, vibrant, always building community.
- ✓ [Cameron Pratt](#) – One of those voices you remember.
- ✓ [Diana Nguyen](#) – Merges cultural narratives with personal insight.
- ✓ [Ethan Li](#) – Tech enthusiast with a philosophical twist.
- ✓ [Fiona Zhang](#) – Bridges Eastern and Western thought seamlessly.
- ✓ [George Kim](#) – Analyzes global politics with depth.
- ✓ [Hannah Lee](#) – Explores identity through storytelling.
- ✓ [Ian Thompson](#) – Delves into historical contexts with clarity.
- ✓ [Julia Roberts](#) – Not the actress, but equally captivating in prose.
- ✓ [Kevin O'Malley](#) – Discusses finance with a human touch.
- ✓ [Laura Chen](#) – Combines art and activism in her narratives.
- ✓ [Michael Davis](#) – Offers a fresh perspective on urban life.
- ✓ [Nina Patel](#) – Writes about diaspora experiences with nuance.
- ✓ [Oscar Hernandez](#) – Captures the essence of modern masculinity.
- ✓ [Priya Singh](#) – Explores spirituality in contemporary settings.
- ✓ [Quentin Blake](#) – Illustrates stories that resonate across ages.
- ✓ [Rachel Adams](#) – Discusses mental health with compassion.

- ✓ [Samuel Green](#) – Analyzes environmental issues critically.
- ✓ [Tina Brown](#) – Shares insights on media and culture.
- ✓ [Uma Kapoor](#) – Writes about culinary traditions with flair.
- ✓ [Victor Lin](#) – Explores tech innovations thoughtfully.
- ✓ [Wendy Martinez](#) – Discusses education reform passionately.
- ✓ [Xander Zhou](#) – Blends fashion and philosophy uniquely.
- ✓ [Yara Hassan](#) – Highlights Middle Eastern art and culture.
- ✓ [Zane Brooks](#) – Offers satirical takes on current events.
- ✓ [Amelia White](#) – Writes about motherhood with authenticity.
- ✓ [Benito Garcia](#) – Explores Latinx identity in modern America.
- ✓ [Clara Liu](#) – Discusses science and society intersections.
- ✓ [Derek Johnson](#) – Analyzes sports beyond the game.
- ✓ [Elena Petrova](#) – Shares tales from Eastern Europe with depth.
- ✓ [Franklin Moore](#) – Discusses philosophy in everyday life.
- ✓ [Grace Kim](#) – Writes about design and its societal impacts.

Okay, now let's get into it...

How to Spot Liars in Seconds



Dear *Permission to be Powerful* Reader,

Listen up, friend...

If you've ever felt that twinge in your gut that someone's feeding you a line...

If you've ever sat across the table from a smooth talker and thought, "*Is this guy for real or is he just jerking my chain?*"...

You're in the right place.

Because today, I'm about to yank the curtain off a hidden world—an underbelly of sly phrases, sneaky pauses, and downright shady tactics that can worm their way into any conversation.

And guess what?

You'll walk out the other side knowing exactly how to spot these verbal and nonverbal whoppers before they sink your trust or your bank account.

Let me tell you a quick story.

It's 2 AM.

I'm hunched over a kitchen table in Rochester, NY.

**I've just been scammed—some bozo sold me on
“the best marketing tool ever,”**



Except all it did was drain my wallet...



And leave me with a stack of shame...



Grief...



And worthless junk...



Ever been there?

That burning anger, that immediate gut check that screams, “*I should’ve known better.*”

That was me.

Furious and embarrassed.

But in that moment, I made a vow: Never again.

I was going to find out exactly how liars operate—every subtle turn of phrase, every slip of body language—and share it with the folks who need it most.

This letter—what you’re reading right now—is the result of that obsession.

It’s not some fluff-laced, sugar-coated piece.

It’s a potent, thorough deep-dive into the Language of Lies, shaped by top-notch scientific research.

The point?

To give you, dear friend, the upper hand in every critical conversation you’ll ever have.

No more guesswork, no more regrets.

Why Do Liars Act So... Weird?

Let’s not mince words. **Liars get weird because lying is hard work.**

They’re juggling the truth, the lie, and the fear of being caught—all at once.

Scientists call it “cognitive load” ([JOURNALS.PLOS.ORG](https://journals.plos.org)).

Basically, a liar is operating on overdrive, mentally spinning plates to keep their story straight.

That mental overload spills into the words they choose, the speed they talk, their random throat-clearing, even how they hold their bodies.

If you're on the lookout, you'll pick up on these subtle *hiccups* in the conversation, like filler words ("um," "uh," "y'know"), oddly placed silent pauses, or an abrupt stutter in speech (JOURNALS.PLOS.ORG).

Liars aren't exactly Shakespeare. They trip over their lines because they're not sure how to keep the story afloat.

And that sets the stage for a big chunk of what you'll see in their *verbal cues*.

The Three Big Verbal Tells

Now, let's cut to the chase. What exactly do you look for when a potential liar opens their mouth?

1. Less "Me," More "Them"

Ever notice how some folks dodge the word "I"?

Instead of saying, "*I talked to Jim about the missing money,*" they'll spout, "*Money was discussed.*" That's called **distancing language**, and it's often a red flag (JOURNALS.PLOS.ORG).

Liars try to wiggle out of personal responsibility by stepping away from those first-person pronouns, hoping it buys them a little shield.

2. Short 'n' Vague

Liars often serve up stories without the gravy: fewer adjectives, fewer unique words, fewer juicy details.

They do this because every extra tidbit is a trap that can blow up in their face later if they forget it (JOURNALS.PLOS.ORG).

The result?

Bland, generic statements that feel *safe* but suspiciously colorless.

Contrast that with a truthful person's "Oh yeah, I remember he wore a bright red tie and smelled like cheap aftershave."

3. Negative Words Galore

Think of negativity like emotional spillage. When you're lying, you might carry around guilt, nerves, or plain old fear.

That can slip into your speech as more negative words: "*hate*," "*no*," "*never*," "*sucks*," "*terrible*." (JOURNALS.PLOS.ORG).

It's like a small leak from the liar's emotional balloon. That negativity might be a sign they're feeling the strain.

Now, let's pause. None of these tells by themselves is a slam-dunk.

If your buddy John says, "*Dude, I never took your pizza*," he might be telling the truth.

But if you start seeing a pattern—fewer self-references, vague statements, negativity, "ums" and "uhs" every three words? That's your neon sign that something's off.

The Paralinguistic Gut-Punch

Ever heard someone's voice squeak when they fib? Maybe you have, maybe you haven't.

The popular theory is that a liar's pitch goes up—nerves lead to a tight voice box, so the voice climbs an octave.

It can happen (PUBMED.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV).

But guess what?

Liars can also steel themselves, controlling that pitch like a pro.

Vocal changes are context-dependent.

Under high stress, sure, voices crack.

But a seasoned fibber in a casual, low-stakes scenario might sound calmer than Mother Teresa on a Sunday morning (JOURNALS.PLOS.ORG).

But the real paralinguistic bombshell is *broken fluency*: sudden stops, stutters, meandering half-sentences.

That's the mind racing, because creating a story from thin air is a cognitively expensive task.

You can't usually hide all the mental gears grinding.

So keep an ear out for that intangible *choppiness* in someone's flow.

Body Language: You've Been Lied To (About Lying)

Now, gather 'round. You know how the old cliché goes: "Liars avoid eye contact, shuffle their feet, scratch their nose like Pinocchio."

It's bunk. *Total myth*. Actual research tears it to shreds.

Studies show there's no universal "tell" like a sweaty brow or darting eyes that *always* means someone is lying (SAULKASSIN.ORG, PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV).

Some folks do look away out of guilt, sure, but plenty of liars stare you down like a hungry cat, thinking that unwavering eye contact makes them

look honest.

The truth?

People are too complicated for easy checklists.

Some get nervous when they're innocent. Others stay relaxed even when they're spinning a tall tale.

That's why focusing on body language alone leads to a carnival of misreads. One poor soul crossing his arms might just be cold, not necessarily a criminal mastermind.

That's not to say there aren't *any* relevant signals. Stress might produce trembling fingers or a stiff posture.

Liars might freeze their torso—fewer natural gestures—because they're afraid any movement might reveal them (RESEARCHGATE.NET).

But these are subtle, and if you bank everything on them, you'll be right about half the time—like flipping a coin (PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV).

That's a losing bet.

The Trickiness of Micro-Expressions

Paul Ekman and shows like Lie to Me made “micro-expressions” famous.

You've probably heard the hype: If you catch that fleeting flicker of anger or fear, you can bust a liar with 100% accuracy. If only.

A 2019 study busted that myth, showing that even highly trained people do no better than chance at catching liars by micro-expressions (PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV).

Why?

Because micro-expressions are rare, blink-and-you-miss-it phenomena, and normal, honest folks can show sudden emotional flashes, too.

So, if you see a brief smirk or cringe, it's not a guaranteed "Gotcha, liar!" moment. It could just be stress, or a random facial twitch, or them thinking about the weird text they got earlier.

Moral of the story?

Micro-expressions alone won't help you. Best to combine them with something else: the actual content of what they say.

The "So Why Does Anyone Lie?" Factor

Another problem is the big juicy emotional hook behind a lie. Liars might be staving off shame, or chasing a thrill known as "duping delight."

That's the sneaky little high they get from pulling one over on you.

And that delight can bubble up as a sudden grin or weird calmness when you'd expect them to be nervous (NATURE.COM).

Then again, if they're terrified—like in a police interrogation—they might be shaking or spouting disclaimers left and right. Different contexts, different cues.

That's what makes the world of lies so muddy.

Interestingly, the more we lie, the easier it gets. Yes, you can literally train your brain to become numb to dishonesty (NATURE.COM).

Neuroscientists discovered something called the “slippery slope” effect: the first big lie lights up your amygdala (the guilt/fear center) like a Christmas tree.

But each time after that, it lights up less—until eventually, telling a big old whopper feels normal.

So if you’re dealing with a practiced liar, buckle up.

They might blow right past the normal cues because they’re numb to the guilt that would trip up an amateur.

Different Lies, Different Contexts

We have everyday “white lies,” like telling your sister “*the dinner was great*” even though it tasted like cardboard.

We also have monstrous whoppers that land people in prison. Each scenario has unique stakes, meaning the liar’s stress and behavior will vary.

• Low-Stakes:

The liar’s not super anxious. Their cues might be minimal. They might just want to avoid conflict or skip an awkward conversation.

• High-Stakes:

Here’s where the sweaty palms come in. Their entire career, freedom, or reputation might be on the line, so the stress can make them slip: repeating the same lines too rigidly, or failing to add credible detail (PUBMED.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV).

They might actually try to recite a script—like a robot—and ironically that’s how you sniff them out.

Real memories shift in small ways each retelling; memorized lies come out identically time after time.

Now, if you’re in the workplace, you might see “polished deception.” Think about a boss faking success or a coworker covering a glaring mistake.

Instead of stammering, they might shower the room in corporate buzzwords, spin relentlessly positive statements, and use that oh-so-careful language that says everything... and nothing.

They hide behind “we” and “the company,” never “I messed up.”

Watch for shifting stories, skimpy specifics, or suspicious data that never quite adds up (GSB.STANFORD.EDU).

Lie Detection Methods That Actually Work

Let’s pull back the veil on something big: *detecting deception is about more than eye twitches or shaky voices.*

The sharpest investigators and interrogators in the world don’t rely on half-baked theories like “Look for a sweaty brow.”

Instead, they use proven techniques that go right for the jugular of a liar’s story.

Here are the top dogs:

1. Verbal Statement Analysis (Content Analysis)

This is the “show me what you’ve got” approach. You take someone’s statement—written, recorded, whatever—and dissect it for the *quality* of detail.

Truth-tellers typically include sensory information, personal emotions, little side notes that say, “Yeah, I was there.”

Liars? They clump together generalities or rely on hammered-down scripts that sound memorized.

Investigators also look for *internal consistency*: do they say one thing in paragraph two, then contradict it in paragraph five? If so, red flag city (PUBMED.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV).

2. Cognitive Load Interviews

We touched on the concept of lying being mentally taxing. Well, the wizards in law enforcement have found a genius way to *magnify* that load.

They’ll ask the suspect for a timeline backwards.

Or throw in weird, specific questions the suspect *didn’t* expect. Or say, “Tell me exactly how it smelled in the hallway.”

A truth-teller, using real memories, can often handle these curveballs.

A liar, forced to invent details on the fly, stumbles (PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV). This is the kind of technique that can push even a confident fibber to slip up.

3. Strategic Use of Evidence (SUE)

Here’s a real gem. Investigators keep certain facts hidden—like phone records, CCTV timestamps, third-party confirmations—and let the suspect talk themselves into a corner.

If the suspect lies about something that can be disproven with evidence, they've effectively outed themselves.

So you catch them not by reading their posture, but by letting them spin a narrative that collapses the moment you reveal the contradictory evidence (PUBMED.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV).

It's sneaky, and it works like a charm.

Take note: **the best** lie detection merges these methods. They peel away the liar's protective layers, forcing them to produce details they *can't* consistently keep straight if the story is false.

Meanwhile, a truthful person can stand tall, because they're recalling actual events.

AI, fMRI, and The So-Called Future of Lie Detection

Now, let's venture into the glitzy realm of modern technology.

You might have heard about AI "lie detector" software that scans your micro-expressions on a Zoom call or picks up "stress frequencies" in your voice.

The pitch is always the same: "*We have 90%+ accuracy. We can read your mind.*" Give me a break.

Reality Check:

The track record of these fancy contraptions is spotty at best (THEATLANTIC.COM).

Sure, in a laboratory with staged lies, an AI can sometimes pick up patterns that ordinary humans miss. But real-life lying is complicated—people are

tired, nervous, or simply have mannerisms that might look suspicious but aren't.

Or they're skilled at lying from decades of practice. The point is, big claims of "infallible AI lie detectors" haven't panned out under rigorous, real-world tests.

What about fMRI and other brain scans?

The theory: lying lights up the brain's prefrontal cortex more than telling the truth.

And yes, in a perfect lab setting—when someone is lying about a simple question like "Is this the card you saw?"—the difference in brain activity might be noticeable (PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV).

But strap that same person into an fMRI for a complex, high-stakes interrogation, and the data can get murky fast.

The machines are costly, immobile, and require near-zero movement.

Hardly the conditions you'll find in a typical police station, courtroom, or border crossing.

So, are these technologies worthless? Not necessarily. They might be stepping stones to more advanced solutions.

But as of right now, **nothing** beats good old-fashioned strategic questioning, combined with analyzing the content of a suspect's statements.

Pinning Down the Truth in Three Moves

1. Establish a Baseline

Before you can spot anomalies in someone's speech or behavior, you have to see what "normal" looks like for them.

Are they naturally a fidgety bag of nerves?

Or do they talk in quick, breathless spurts? If you don't know, you might label them a liar for being antsy... when actually they're just excited or have had three cups of coffee.

That's why the pros start by asking harmless, neutral questions to get a sense of the person's usual style (PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV).

That baseline acts like a yardstick for measuring changes once the tough questions begin.

2. Give 'em Rope

Liars love the sound of their own voice—mainly because they're trying to control the narrative. So let them talk. Don't interrupt. The more they babble, the more potential cracks appear in the story.

If you see them sweat or break out in "um-uh-um" territory, store that in your mental tally but keep that poker face.

A skilled questioner often does minimal talking, letting the suspect reveal themselves.

3. Probe for Specifics

Don't accept vague claims. If they say, "Yeah, I met Bob at 6," press them:

"Which door did Bob come through?"

"What was he wearing?"

“Where did you set your coffee?”

Innocent folks might not recall every detail, but they won't mind the questions.

Liars, however, are scrambling to build consistent answers in real time. That's when the stammering or sudden leaps in logic occur.

Or they might play the “I don't remember anything” card.

If that “fog” seems too selective, guess what?

The Brain's Role: Why All This Matters

We keep talking about “cognitive load” for a reason. Lying engages multiple brain areas that handle decision-making, inhibition, and short-term memory—mainly in the prefrontal cortex.

Telling the truth is typically the simpler, more automatic path. That's why the *extra mental overhead* for lying can leak out as those “ums” and “uhs,” or those second-long pauses we can't quite put our finger on. It's the liar's brain pumping the brakes to ensure they don't slip up.

There's also the emotional side. The amygdala flares up if the person feels guilt or fear (NATURE.COM).

That can lead to micro-changes in voice, posture, or even facial color. Some liars, especially pathological ones, might not get that guilt jolt. They're calm under pressure because they've habituated to lying.

That's why you can't rely on any single sign. Skilled liars can slip past naive watchers who only look for sweaty foreheads or shaking hands.

How to Armor Yourself Against Everyday Liars

Look, not all deception is about multi-million-dollar fraud or murder confessions.

Sometimes it's the coworker who claims they "totally sent that email," or a friend telling you they're "busy tonight" but you suspect something else.

Here are a few everyday tips:

1. Ask Follow-Ups Casually

You don't need to be a detective shining a bright light in their face.

Just keep the conversation rolling gently.

If they claim they were at the gym, ask "Which gym?"

Oh, do they still have that broken treadmill in the corner?"

If they're lying, watch for the stutter-step. If they're telling the truth, they might casually say "Oh yeah, that old treadmill is gone now."

They got a new one in its place."

2. Listen for Gaps and Contradictions

Many liars forget what they've said just a minute ago. If the story changes slightly—like they said they saw a red car, then later mention it was green—it's your clue.

Real memories have a consistent core, even if small details shift. Liars might *over-correct* by repeating the same lines too rigidly.

So be alert for those extremes of either contradictory details or an oddly perfect script (JOURNALS.PLOS.ORG).

3. Keep Emotions in Check

Ever see someone blow up in righteous indignation when you question them? That can be a tactic.

They're counting on your fear of conflict to shut you down. They'll say, "How dare you not believe me?!" and stomp around.

Granted, an honest person can be offended too, but watch if the anger appears suspiciously fast or too theatrical.

A calm, rational approach can defuse the show. Sometimes, that meltdown itself is a smokescreen.

The Deeper Psychology: Why We Fall for Lies

Here's something painful: on average, humans do only slightly better than a coin toss at detecting lies (PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV).

Why?

Because *we want to believe each other*. Society would collapse if we were suspicious all the time.

This is called the "Truth-Default Theory." Most of us assume honesty from people in our circle until something major triggers us to doubt them.

By that time, we might already be knee-deep in the consequences of believing a lie.

Marketers, con artists, and manipulative folks exploit this. They create illusions of trust—friendly conversation, repeated eye contact,

confident posture—knowing we’re wired to believe them.

This is the same reason we skip reading the fine print in a contract or get swayed by a heartfelt sales pitch. We trust first, question later (NPR.ORG).

So how do you protect yourself without living as a paranoid hermit? The solution is to keep healthy skepticism on call, especially when something big is on the line—money, relationships, reputations.

Don’t assume everyone’s lying, but keep your antenna up for those cues (contradictions, vague statements, odd negativity), and don’t be afraid to challenge them politely.

A decent person with nothing to hide might be slightly annoyed, but they’ll also provide clarifications. A liar, on the other hand, might well meltdown or spin in circles.

Spotting Lies in Text or Email

What if you’re not face-to-face? The modern world is full of remote communication—texts, emails, DMs, you name it. Are there signposts of lying there too? Absolutely. Liars might:

- **Overuse formal language (“Therefore, kindly note…”) in an attempt to sound official or distant.**
- **Provide minimal detail or avoid direct personal references (“It was decided that shipping would be delayed”).**
- **Use a strange number of qualifiers (“Honestly,” “to be frank,” “let me be clear”) to convince you they’re legit.**

- **Make contradictory statements across multiple emails (“We had 50 units in stock” vs. “All inventory was sold out.”).**

Emails also let you track changes over time.

If they said last week “no problem, we’ll deliver Tuesday,” but this week their story is “we never promised Tuesday,” you can literally see the mismatch.

In a phone call, they can deny what they said. In an email chain, it’s there in black and white. So keep your receipts.

The “What If I’m the Liar?” Moment

Let’s address the elephant in the room. Maybe you’re reading this, nodding along, and thinking about times you yourself *stretched the truth*.

Not proud of it, but it happens. If you want to be better at telling the truth (and—hint, hint—sleep better at night), here are a few tips:

- **Be real with yourself. Are you lying out of fear, shame, or convenience?**
- **Realize that short-term gains from lying can lead to huge trust blowouts down the road.**
- **Practice coming clean in low-stakes scenarios. Start small. Build the “honesty muscle.”**

- If you absolutely must lie (in a scenario that truly calls for it, e.g. a “white lie” to protect someone’s feelings), keep it simple and short.

But also understand that the more you do it, the more you risk normalizing it. And once lying is normalized, it’s a slippery slope (NATURE.COM).

In short, being on the up-and-up is easier for your soul—and ironically, it’s also *harder* for others to successfully accuse you of anything shady, because your track record will speak for itself.

Final Word: Equip Yourself & Prosper

There’s no crystal ball for calling out every lie. Still, you’re now armed with the blueprint. You know why liars stumble over details. You know that focusing on body language alone is about as reliable as flipping a coin. You also have real-world strategies—like cognitive interviews and statement analysis—that can slash the odds of falling victim to a tall tale.

The lesson is simple: *be aware, not paranoid.*

Our world runs on trust. We can’t grill every coworker, friend, or spouse about every detail. We’d go insane. But the moment something big’s on the line—money, commitments, or your personal safety—pull these tools out of your back pocket.

Listen for verbal cues, dig into specifics, watch how they answer unexpected questions. If they stammer, deflect, or show negativity, weigh

that in your mind. And if they unravel when you produce evidence? Well, you have your answer.

Honesty is a commodity in short supply, but it's also the best policy. By mastering the Language of Lies, you sharpen your instincts to keep the unscrupulous from riding you like a stolen pony.

You'll see the difference in your business deals, your personal relationships, and your day-to-day peace of mind. Because once you know *exactly* how deception creeps in, you hold the power to shut it down before it ever gains traction.

So, friend, here's to you: your newfound ability to sniff out a lie, your unstoppable confidence in any conversation. Shake the scoundrels, outsmart the cons, and build the life you deserve—built on a foundation of truth.

It's a better way to live. And, trust me, it's a better way to sleep at night.

Editor's Note: Wanna Go Deeper?

If you made it this far...

If you felt a fire light up inside you while reading this...

If something clicked and you said, "Damn—I *need* more of this in my life..."

Then you're exactly who I created the VIP experience for.

Permission to Be Powerful VIP isn't just about bonus content or behind-the-scenes access. It's a weapon. A signal. A declaration.

It's for the brave few who want to:

- Think sharper.
- Spot bullshit faster.

- Write clearer.
- Heal deeper.
- Sell smarter.
- Love harder.

It's for the folks who read an article like this and don't just *nod*—they *highlight, annotate, and take action*.

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Until next time,

Anton

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